April 13, 1999

MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE (Second Session)

The second session of the eighth regular meeting of the Faculty Senate of the College of Charleston convened at 5:10 p.m. on Tuesday, April 13 in Alumni Hall, Speaker of the Faculty Trisha Folds-Bennett presiding. Fifty-one senators attended.

New Business

Discussion of Revised Proposal for a General Education Curriculum at the College of Charleston, presented by the Academic Planning Committee, continued as summarized below.

FOUNDATIONS

Foreign Languages, Classical and Modern:

Jim Carew claimed that the two-year language requirement, which many other colleges and universities have dropped, is no longer educationally valid. Our students do not have proficiency in a language after two years, he said, and suggested that if our purpose is to introduce students to some basics of language and culture, that can be accomplished in one year. A two-year requirement, he contended, makes more sense if the two years are spent studying two different languages. Andrew Sobiesuo replied that not all linguists agree that languages should be studied in the early years. Paige Wisotzka added that the language departments do not profess to achieve proficiency after two years; instead, the courses give students not only an appreciation of another language and culture but also a better understanding of their own language. Elizabeth Martinez questioned the logic of reducing the language requirement to one year if our students are not proficient after two years.

Stephanie Low moved that the words "and subsequent course" be dropped from the end of the first sentence in the Foreign Languages paragraph. The motion failed.

Lee Lindner moved that in the Foreign Languages paragraph, the words "competence... through the 202 level" be changed to "competence... through the 102 level." In response to Mr. Lindner’s motion, Ms. Wisotzka asserted that science majors especially need a background in languages because of the many international science conferences they might attend. Both she and Mr. Sobiesuo noted that currently science
majors seldom register for the 6-credit intensive language courses because the requirements for their major leave no room for such a course. After a call for the question, the motion failed.

Returning to a point he made at the April 6 meeting, Glenn Lesses argued the Welfare Committee's position that the distinction between Foundations and Intellectual Traditions is artificial and that English 101 and 102 should be the only courses required of students in their freshman year. To support his point, he cited the many times the word "skill" is mentioned on pp. 18-19 of the Revised Proposal in the list of objectives for the Intellectual Tradition courses. He thinks that the Foundations requirement of the proposal does not give students enough latitude to explore potential majors in their first two years.

Stephanie Low agreed that English should be a Foundations course, but she thinks that math skills are crucial as well. She moved that Foreign Languages be moved from Foundations into Intellectual Traditions.

Speaking against the motion, Lynne Ford argued that the distinction between Foundations and Intellectual Traditions is not arbitrary. The Foundations courses concentrate on the skills students need to communicate in written, oral and numerical forms, and students need to begin building these skills early so that they will be prepared for opportunities like study abroad and global perspective courses. In answer to Mr. Lesses, she contended that skills are mentioned in the objectives for the Intellectual Traditions courses because they must be there with content, and, she added, room for Intellectual Traditions courses is on the Majors Worksheet for every semester of the first two years. Rich Bodek also spoke against the motion, saying that he wants students have English, math, and language courses before enrolling in entry level history courses.

In support of the motion, Kem Fronabarger argued that students come to the College seeking a body of knowledge and preparation for a career. A large number of Foundations courses, he thinks, take away from career preparation. Chris Abate added that Ms. Ford's defense of Foundations courses was clearly an argument for including natural science courses. Marion Doig supported the motion to move foreign languages out of Foundations and pointed to the pre-med curriculum with its first-semester requirements of two 4-credit science courses, one (usually 4-credit) math course, and Freshman English. Requiring a foreign language course, he said, increases the credit load to 18 hours of required courses. Mike Auerbach echoed Mr. Doig's argument and added that the proposal disadvantages biology majors.

After a call for the question, the motion to move foreign languages to Intellectual Traditions failed by a vote of 26 to 21.

Chris Abate then moved that the natural sciences requirement be brought into Foundations. The motion failed.
English:

Hugh Wilder questioned the part of the English requirement stating that students must “demonstrate competence in written communication” and argued that we should trust our colleagues in the English Department to determine competence without adding another layer of bureaucracy to the proposal. After a number of senators echoed Mr. Wilder’s objections to the demonstration of competence part of the English requirement, Kem Fronabarger moved to delete from the paragraph describing the English requirement everything after “Students must complete the approved 6 hour English composition sequence.” The motion passed.

Asserting his belief that Freshman English is the only course that must be required during the first year, Chip Biernbaum wants phrasing to that effect in the proposal. Lynne Ford replied that existing policy requires students to enroll in English 101 and 102 and that the proposal does not address existing policy. Noting that the General Education and the Majors Worksheet does not specify that English must be taken in the first year, Mr. Biernbaum moved that language be included on the General Education and the Worksheet informing students that they are required to enroll in the approved English composition sequence during their first year and until successful completion of the sequence. John Newell accepted the motion as friendly.

INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

Natural Sciences:

Bob Mignone expressed some concern about depth vs. breath in the pairings of science courses allowed in the proposal, but Kem Fronabarger claimed that “cross pollination” of introductory level science courses could be quite beneficial.

Finding problems with the phrasing of the paragraph describing the natural sciences requirement, Stephanie Low moved the following replacement paragraph:

Students are required to complete an approved 8-hour lab science requirement in natural science. Normally this requirement will be fulfilled with two 4-hour courses, not necessarily limited to the 101-102 sequences in the same discipline. The student must complete both courses in order to satisfy the requirement.

The change, she noted, removes references to the approval process and specifically to the role of the Gen Ed Committee (rather than the science departments) in that process. The motion failed.

Phil Dustan claimed that two 100-level courses will not give our students the background in science that an educated person in today’s world needs and argued for a third semester
of science; in other words students need a 101-102 sequence plus at least one more semester of science. Why, he asked, do we privilege languages with a two-year requirement and science with just one. Von Bakanic contended that the 6-hour social science requirement assures that students are exposed to the kinds of training that Mr. Duskin described. Andrew Sobiesuo added that three hours per week students spend in the 1-credit lab required for each science course mean that class hours students spend fulfilling the science requirement are, in fact, equal to those spent on the foreign language requirement.

History:

Richard Nunan alleged that the upper-case “H” in “History courses” in the first sentence of the paragraph limits the courses that can satisfy the requirement to ones offered by the History Department. Kathy Johnson-Thom suggested using a lower-case “h.” John Newell admitted that not many courses outside the History Department cover the “multiple aspects of human culture over a significant expanse of time” as called for in the requirement.

Peter McCandless moved two changes in the parenthetical phrase in the History paragraph, both of which were accepted as friendly: change (i.e., political, intellectual, or social history) to “(e.g., political, intellectual, social, or cultural history).”

INTEGRATED LIBERAL LEARNING

Interdisciplinary Thematic Clusters:

Julia Eichelberger, while in favor of the concept, finds the integrative writing assignment too difficult to be feasible and moved the following:

That the ITC component of the GenEd proposal drop its requirement that students write an integrative essay or complete another integrative assignment.

In her rationalization, Ms. Eichelberger claimed that the integrative assignment is the most cumbersome and logistically difficult part of the ITC, that individual ITC courses would likely contain integrative assignments, and that the GenEd committee can devise other ways of assessing the effectiveness of the IITC’s.

Lynne Ford, Angela Kouters, and Phil Jos all spoke against the motion, stressing the importance of the essay as an essential component of the ITC, providing students the means of making the cross-disciplinary connections essential to the clusters.

Speaking for the motion, George Pothering argued for flexibility and pointed out that some clusters have an inherent integrative component. Hugh Wilder and Tom Heeney
questioned who would generate topics for and grade the essay. Bishop Hunt supported simplifying the ITC component, and Glenn Lesses faulted the check off grading of the essay as described on p. 11 of the proposal.

The motion to drop the integrative essay passed.

Mike Marcell spoke against the ITC’s, claiming that the three separate courses do not provide students the dynamic and interesting experience inherent in team-taught courses. He also warned that hidden pre-requisites exist in many of the cluster courses and that resources will be taken from the majors when many departments will have to develop 200-level courses for the clusters. Citing the difficulties in meeting the demands of the Communication major, Tom Heeney agreed with Mr. Marcell’s point about draining resources from the major. Mr. Heeney’s other objections to the ITC’s are that he thinks the budget figures in the proposal much too conservative, that the sequencing of courses will require “immaculate” advising, that students changing majors will likely have their graduation date extended, and that ITC’s will have a negative impact on students’ choosing double majors and study abroad opportunities.

Returning to his concerns about advising, Mr. Heeney moved that the proposal include the recommendation from Sue Sommer-Kresse’s committee on advising that no faculty member have more than 25-30 advisees. Some discussion followed about whether or not preceptors would be included in calculating the advising load. Speaking against the motion, Lynn Cherry asserted that the GenEd proposal is curricular and that advising is not part of the curriculum. Still concerned about the statement on p. 12 about the essential role that advising will play in aiding students in choosing and completing the ITC requirement, Mr. Heeney withdrew his motion with the assumption that his concerns will be addressed during implementation.

Mr. Lesses pointed to a discrepancy in phrasing between 3 (b) in the Academic Planning Committee’s report (p. 5) and the requirements for ITC’s on the Proposal (p. 9). To remove the discrepancy, Jane McCollough moved that the Academic Planning Committee add the words “and at least one course at the 300-level” to the end of 3 (b) in their preface to the proposal. John Newell accepted this as a friendly amendment.

Motion of Adjournment

At 7:20 a motion to adjourn until 5:00 p.m. on April 20 passed by a vote of 28 to 12.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Haney
Faculty Secretary